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Theo A. F. Kuipers

**‘THISGRUE’ AND ‘THISEMERALD-PART’**

**REPLY TO JOHN WELCH**

I like John Welch’s contribution very much, not least because he deals with one of the famous Quinean examples, rabbits versus rabbit parts, in a way that confirms my impression that Quine could have expressed himself much more clearly than he in fact did. To be sure, that would not have stimulated so much exegesis of what he really meant. However, what is at least as important is that Welch demands attention to a problem underlying all “gruesome” problems, the classification problem. Of course, the fact that his solution is inspired by my solution of Goodman’s problem with the general grue hypothesis is also something I noted with pleasure. In this reply I first suggest an improved version of the classification problem and solution; I then raise a question about the claimed analogy with the Quinean problem.

**The Classification Problem**

Let me first state that I very much agree with Welch’s claim that the relevant general and predictive hypotheses presuppose a solution of the classification problem as soon as there is some relevant evidence for these hypotheses. Moreover, I also agree with the intuitive a priori claim that “This emerald is green” (THISGREEN) is more plausible than “This emerald is grue” (THISGRUE). But I have some reservations about his explication of this intuition and its defense. To begin with the former, instead of his  $WIA_c$ , at the end of Section 2:

For all colors  $C$  and  $C'$ ,  $C \neq C'$ , “This  $E$  is  $C$ ” is (much) more plausible than the conjunction “This  $EM$  is  $C$ ” and “This  $\bar{E}M$  is  $C$ ” (which is equivalent to “This  $E$  is  $Q$ ” when  $C = G$  and  $C' = B$ ).

I would prefer:

For all colors  $C$  and  $C'$ ,  $C \neq C'$ , “This  $E$  is  $C$ ” is (much) more plausible than “This  $E$  is  $MC$  or  $\bar{M}C$ ” (which is equivalent to “This  $E$  is  $Q$ ” when  $C = G$  and  $C' = B$ ).

In: R. Festa, A. Aliseda and J. Peijnenburg (eds.), *Confirmation, Empirical Progress, and Truth Approximation* (Poznań Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, vol. 83), pp. 138-139. Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2005.

For, in the standard example,  $Q$  is equivalent to the “disjunctive predicate” ‘ $MG$  or  $\bar{MB}$ ’, which makes the whole claim “This  $E$  is  $MG$  or  $\bar{MB}$ ” easy to interpret, whereas the conjunctive claim suggested by Welch is very difficult to interpret, at least for me.

Happily enough, I do not think that this point really weakens the argumentation in Section 3 in favor of either version of the prior problem. Moreover, regarding the posterior classification problem, the argument with respect to the relative likelihoods really seems to need a similar change. More specifically, the relevant evidential statement “This emerald looks both green and grue” should be replaced. In its present version it is formally equivalent to “This emerald looks both ( $MG$  or  $\bar{MG}$ ) and ( $MG$  or  $\bar{MB}$ ),” that is, “This emerald looks  $MG$  or ( $\bar{MG}$  and  $\bar{MB}$ ),” and hence, assuming that  $B$  and  $G$  are incompatible, “This emerald looks  $MG$ ,” which can hardly be intended. However, the intended version probably is “This emerald looks green or grue,” which formally amounts to “This emerald looks ( $MG$  or  $\bar{MG}$ ) or ( $MG$  or  $\bar{MB}$ ),” that is, “This emerald looks ( $MG$  or  $\bar{MG}$  or  $\bar{MB}$ ).” Indeed, as Welch attempts to argue for his reading, in my reading there does not seem to be a reason to assign a greater likelihood to THISGRUE relative to this evidence than to THISGREEN.

As an aside, I should warn the reader that Welch’s claim early in Section 2 that my theory of confirmation is Bayesian, though non-standard, is correct in the general sense that it fits into a Bayesian probabilistic framework. However his claim is not correct in the specific sense of my classification of principal theories of confirmation, also indicated by Welch, where “Bayes’ theory” is a specific kind of enabling inductive confirmation, viz. by inductive priors rather than inductive likelihoods.

#### **‘Thisemerald-part’ versus ‘Thisrabbit-part’**

As already suggested, I am pleased with Welch’s attempt to construe an analogy between, to be precise, the classificatory grue-problem and Quine’s reference problem with ‘Gavagai’. Although I think the main line of argument, essentially leading to a strong relativization of Quine’s indeterminacy claims, is basically correct, there may be one point of dispute at the very beginning. If a piece of emerald falls apart into a number of pieces (not too many), we would say that we have obtained that number of emeralds. However, rabbits now more viable ways of reproduction than falling apart. Hence the two types of examples may not be as similar as Welch suggests. I leave it to him to find out whether his interesting distinction between visual and tactile impressions strengthens or weakens the relevance of the evident distinction of the two cases.